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LOCAL NEWS

Niverville to See Smaller Homes

■ If you've been looking to buy a house in Niverville but have found yourself priced out of the market, there may be some new options coming your way. Starting this summer, The Highlands development will be adding a street of smaller homes for lower price points.

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LOCAL NEWS

Oncologists: Don't Delay Seeking Cancer Treatment

■ The low rate of new cancer diagnoses in 2020 is alarming some doctors who are concerned about current trends.

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

Reclaiming Wellness

■ As the pandemic eases, it's time to course-correct from some destructive habits we've embraced during our long year of isolation.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Brady Kenneth Releases New Single

■ The local country music artist has a new single coming in March, which will be followed by many others this year.

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Provincial Fire Grants Will Cover Local Projects, Including New Tanker

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MLA Ron Schuler with Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen.

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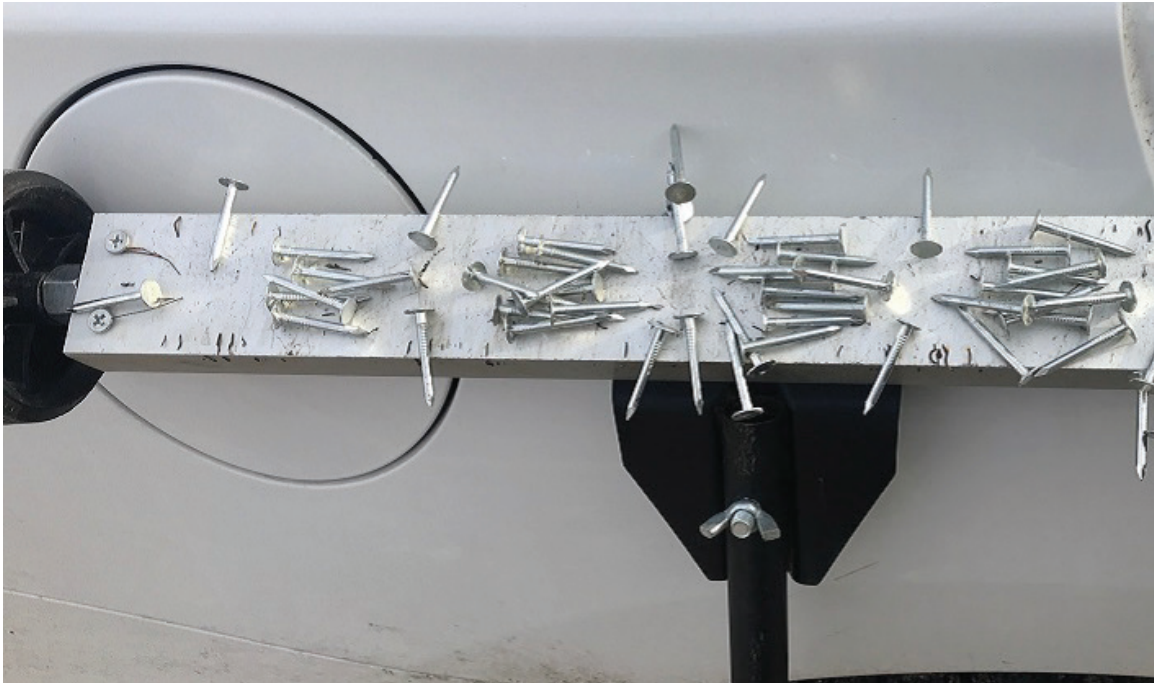
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Nails collected from the surface of Highway 200.

SUSAN ZIMMERMAN

RCMP Patrolling Highway 200 for Nails, Encourage Surveillance

By Sara Beth Dacombe
sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Residents of the RM of Ritchot continue to be plagued by incidents of nails on Highway 200, a.k.a. St. Mary's Road.

The nails found so regularly on the highway south of the Perimeter have caused thousands of dollars in damages to date from irreparable punctured tires and are an ongoing safety risk to motorists.

Due in large part to the frequency of the incidents, residents suspect someone might be placing the nails on the road intentionally as an act of vandalism and have reached out to local authorities for help.

The Manitoba RCMP can confirm that they've received more phone calls this February, and they say that they are stepping up patrols in the area while requesting the public's help to stop the criminal activity.

"We did receive another report in early February," says Tara Seel, media relations officer for the Manitoba RCMP. "This has the potential to be a very dangerous act and we are interested in seeing this come to an end."

Seel says that although the RCMP are increasing the number of patrol cars in the area, the challenge is being in the right place at the right time.

"Ultimately, we are always only getting there after the fact," she says. "Our vehicles are patrolling in the area and we have increased our presence in that way, but the nails aren't there all the time. So when

we patrol, we are not finding the nails, so the result is we do receive the information after the fact. This is a very challenging type of crime because no one is directly seeing it happen."

According to the RCMP, this type of vandalism has an increased possibility for injury, and that's what makes it a serious issue. They are looking to hear from the community and team up in some way to help stop these acts.

Solutions such as community or private surveillance cameras would not be discouraged and Seel has some tips for anyone with property in the area who may have a surveillance camera.

"Yes, we are very open to surveillance footage if anyone has any," Seel says. "Basically, if you're not broadcasting it, like it's not being posted on Facebook or being made public, that's going to be okay. It's a public space and people's expectation of privacy or right to privacy while in a public space is limited. And submitting a video to police is not considered broadcast. People should know that and know they wouldn't be doing anything wrong. So if anyone has any footage, we would definitely be interested in it. But more so, if you hear someone talking about these events at length or someone has more knowledge about it than might seem usual, that might be an indication that they're involved in some way and you could provide that information in a private tip to investigators. So please contact us."

While the City of Winnipeg and the RM of Ritchot have both been

involved in the clean-up of these incidents, solutions from local government have been slow to surface.

Mitch Duval, Ritchot's CAO, had previously said that community surveillance cameras were "not out of the question" and the RM would be willing to talk to the RCMP about how and where to install community cameras.

"The municipality is continuing to investigate camera options, and may be putting some funds in this year's budget to proceeding with one in the community," says Duval on the question of potential surveillance cameras. "However, this will likely not help the nail situation, as this is [occurring] by the northern end of the municipality, not in the communities."

Aside from cameras, another solution for residents would be to avoid driving on the specific stretch of highway that seems to be most often affected. But avoiding the area isn't feasible for many locals who live in the area and need to commute into the south end of the city in a timely manner.

The RCMP continues to monitor the situation.

"It is certainly a public safety issue and it is something we're taking very seriously, so our first priority is that, if anyone has any information, we'd like them to come forward," says Seel. "And after that, keep your eyes peeled. Watch your speed. If you're going slower, the impact and possible injury could be less if something should happen."

The St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment can be contacted at (204) 433-7908.

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PCH Outbreak: Resident's Family Raises Concern

By Jennifer Lavin

The COVID-19 outbreak at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville remains active, but as of the beginning of March indications are that it could be nearing its end.

The first case, a staff member, was reported to the public on January 4. As of the most recent update from management, made available on February 17, there were a total of 51 cases, of which 38 have been residents. Nine residents have passed away. Thirteen staff members have also tested positive for the virus.

Before the outbreak, there were 80 residents in the PCH, meaning that approximately 48 percent of the residents contracted COVID-19 by mid-February and 11 percent have passed away.

The residents have now received both of their vaccination shows. The second dose was completed on February 18. A good number of staff have been being vaccinated as well.

Up until their February 9 update, the PCH had been reporting that the cases remained confined to two neighbourhoods, Prairie Rose and Lilac Lane. However, the updates since that time no longer made this assertion.

"Our staff have worked quite hard at monitoring our residents, as well as any crossover between all of the neighbourhoods," says CEO Wes Hildebrand.

Hildebrand declined to clarify whether recent cases cropped up in other neighbourhoods during the course of the outbreak.

One Niverville resident with a fair bit of experience with the PCH has concerns about the handling of the outbreak.

Stephan Geissler's grandfather, Egon Meyer, resided at Heritage Life for three years before passing away from COVID-19 in February. During that time, Geissler got to know many of the residents and staff.

"The nurses and healthcare aides do tremendous work, but in my opinion are overworked and understaffed across the board," says



Egon Meyer on December 17, 2020, speaking with his daughter Vivian Meyer approximately one month before he passed away from COVID-19.

STEPHAN GEISSLER

Geissler. "It is my understanding that on overnight shifts, there is only one nurse for 80 residents. If you have multiple residents who fall ill overnight, the quality of care becomes severely compromised because one nurse can't reasonably attend to multiple sick patients at the same time. Healthcare aides do what they can within their authority, but it's a delicate balance as some people require more care than others."

Geissler wonders how one or two support staff can manage all this, given that some residents have dementia and tend to wander.

"Mealtimes used to be group activities," he says. "How do two staff and one nurse ensure that residents can safely eat their meals? A lot of residents require assistance or are at risk for choking. I just don't think the resources are there."

Hildebrand addressed the

question of staffing. "Heritage Life Personal Care Home has always met the staffing contingent that is required by our provincial government," he says. "Our residents are being served and are eating in their own neighbourhoods. In outbreak neighbourhoods, the residents eat in their rooms."

Nonetheless, Geissler says that on a few occasions his grandfather was left without water that he could reach, or he was stuck waiting for help to either get to the washroom or out of the washroom.

"It's difficult to have those conversations with your loved one and try to explain why that's happening, because the concerns are legitimate and frustrating and they're the ones living it," Geissler says. "We know everyone tried to do their best, and it's what you can expect when the staff levels are the way

they are and fresh faces who don't know the residents join the fold. I don't think this is a reflection on the staff so much as it's a reflection on the province for underfunding care homes and creating a work situation that is very emotionally and physically draining on both staff and residents. Our most vulnerable citizens deserve the best care in their final years."

Geissler was a designated caregiver for his grandfather, but with that responsibility came a stipulation: if an outbreak occurred at the PCH, designated caregivers could be required to care for their loved one under the supervision of the staff.

Geissler was unable to accept that responsibility in its entirety because of pre-existing medical conditions.

"It's a shady thing to ask someone to come in and do that, a family member with no medical

training, placing themselves at risk by entering a hotbed of COVID-19 to care for their loved one because the government failed to protect them," Geissler says. "I just felt like this was desperate and a non-plan."

Fortunately, Geissler and his family were able to communicate with Meyer via iPad and phone conversations.

"At times there have been directives from Public Health to stop or restart visitation," says Hildebrand. "The designated caregivers are a key part of the care plan for all our residents."

Geissler feels that the staff of the PCH did their best overall, but he thinks the board may not have fully explored other models of care that have proven to be successful.

Early in the outbreak, Geissler and his mother expressed their concern to management that the chosen approach, which allowed for indoor visitation, could lead to more airborne transmission of the virus. They were also concerned that other families might breach protocols during visits.

They suggested moving towards supervised and distanced visits, which were more common during the pandemic's first wave. He says that management chose to remain focused on the residents' mental health and the effects of isolation.

"It's a tough situation," Geissler says. "We do feel that there were reasonable options to hold visits and reduce the risk of exposure."

Despite everything, Geissler saw staff members going above and beyond to care for his grandfather and the other residents. He believes these staff were exhausted and overworked and yet still gave of their time, and their love, to those who needed it so desperately.

Although Egon Meyer died in February, Geissler says that his wish was to see change happen in the PCH to allow for more person-centred care and for the province to acknowledge its failures in terms of offering good quality of life for those transitioning from independent living to round-the-clock care.

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MLA Ron Schuler with Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen.

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

Provincial Fire Grants Will Cover Local Projects, Including New Tanker

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Last October, the provincial government launched the Fire Protection Grant program, designed to distribute \$5 million to support fire protection and emergency response initiatives across the province.

In the final analysis, the government ended up nearly doubling the fund, selecting more than \$9 million in projects.

On February 25, Springfield-Ritchot MLA Ron Schuler, also Minister of Infrastructure, announced a combined \$360,000 for local projects for the RM of Ritchot and the Town of Niverville.

"These important investments demonstrate our government's commitment to enhancing public safety," says Schuler. "The investments made to the Town of

Niverville and RM of Ritchot will strengthen these communities for generations to come."

The largest investment will be a new 1,500-gallon tanker truck and portable tank for the RM of Ritchot's fire department, valued at \$304,950. Ritchot will also be able to purchase gear extractors worth \$16,200.

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen is particular excited about the municipality's new tanker truck.

"We are always happy to partner with the province," says Mayor Ewen. "This exciting investment will have a lasting impact for our community."

Meanwhile, the Town of Niverville has been granted three grants: for seven sets of turnout gear (\$17,150), nozzles and appliances (\$15,570), and an extractor for turnout gear (\$8,650).

An extractor is an essential

machine used by firefighters to extract harmful oils and contaminants from gear used in the line of duty. It helps to protect firefighters.

"Safety continues to be a key priority for our government," says Schuler. "This funding will help support our local governments in their efforts to provide long-term fire protection for their residents and businesses."

Why was the fund expanded from the initial \$5 million announced last fall? According to Derek Johnson, Minister of Municipal Relations, the fund was so greatly received that the number of applications exceeded their expectations.

"Our government is committed to the protection of Manitobans and this additional funding will ensure effective fire prevention services are available to all

communities," says Johnson. "We received over 200 applications... By allocating additional funding for the grant, we can assist more communities in meeting their fire protection goals and help improve the service delivery of Manitoba's fire service across our province."

These grant announcements have been broadly welcomed by the Manitoba Association of Fire Chief.

"The Manitoba Association of Fire Chiefs is pleased with the support given to Manitoba fire departments through the Manitoba Fire Protection Grant," says the organization's president, Darren Fedorchuk. "The funds allocated through this grant will benefit both large and small departments throughout the province and will assist us in providing our cities, towns, and municipalities with the quality protection they deserve."

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Mockup of the smaller homes to be built in The Highlands.

SUNSET ESTATES

Highlands Developer Focusing on Smaller Homes

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville recently approved the development of smaller residential lots. Consequently, smaller houses are now on the way in The Highlands. The new houses will come in at approximately 675 square feet on the main floor, offering a new level of affordability to those looking to move to Niverville.

"We have a fairly large development here, and in any good development you should have many different styles or types or prices of houses," says Len Peters of Sunset Estates, the developer behind The Highlands. "We've got the big walk-out lots backing onto the ponds, and in Highlands Village we've got more of the four-, five-, and six-plex townhouses that we offer. Then we have 'normal' lots. They're not walkouts; they're flat lots in a variety of sizes, with smaller lots coming in around 40 to 50 feet wide... But now, in this portion of the development, we are trying to hit a lower price point still."

The town had previously approved the smaller lot size, but Sunset Estates then required a

variation to propose house plans smaller than what was previously zoned for in The Highlands.

At a council meeting on February 2, council approved the smaller house plans.

Peters says that with the increased cost of building materials related to COVID-19, there is a need to present lower prices for people to be able to buy houses.

"We're trying to get the price point down for people who would not be able to buy otherwise," he says. "There's always going to be a demand for affordability, no matter if times are good or times are bad. People need affordability. Now, that means something different to everybody, but people need to be able to afford to buy a house. We're trying to fill a bit of that demand in Niverville."

BIG DEMAND FOR SMALL HOMES

The types of homes proposed by Sunset Estates will be small, and small is sometimes perceived as being less valuable and therefore less desirable.

"Affordable means something different today," Peters says of these

new homes. "It doesn't mean low end. Everybody needs a house they can afford. For most people, that number is lower than half-a-million-dollar homes."

With years of experience in the housing game, he says that having a versatile development leads to finished neighbourhoods where people can purchase, live, and pay taxes, which can drive up property values—as opposed to neighbourhoods with larger lots that may remain unsold or vacant.

"I've been doing this for 17 years and I hear that complaint all the time," he says. "Whenever you want to do a development when you have smaller houses or duplexes, people show up and the concern is, it's going to bring my property value down. And it's never been the case. I've never seen it before... it's not reality."

Affordable housing is also sometimes called entry-level housing. Peters says a smaller home with a lower price point is a smart purchase and is often the most effective way to enter the housing market for the first time.

"The biggest thing that keeps someone from buying a house for

the first time is the down-payment," he points out. "Monthly rent is often more expensive than a mortgage payment, but people have trouble coming up with the down-payment to get out of their renting situation. Everybody needs that first house. Some people don't have the help for a down-payment to move directly into middle-income-level housing."

He also points to the underlying unfairness of essentially telling someone they're not allowed to live in a town because their starting price point is too low.

"It doesn't make them a bad person or a bad neighbour; it just means maybe they don't have a parent or grandparent in a financial position to easily step up and help give or loan them the money. This is often a professional person, but they still might not be able to save enough in their monthly expenses if they are renting to afford the lumpsum of a 15 to 20 percent down-payment."

Entry-level housing purchasers are often young professionals who want to start a family, in which case they may need to get by on a single-income for a while.

Additionally, many single people

are prospective buyers for small homes.

"I've done entry-level housing before and it's been a great success," says Peter. "There's a big demand for this type of home. You see young families purchasing and you get young people moving in with a kid or two. You get professionals, nurses, teachers, engineers. Maybe they're single and don't have a second income to support a house, but they realize they don't need it either."

Peters says that these young people may eventually want to upgrade and move into bigger homes, but an attitude of permanence is still possible in these neighbourhoods.

"You won't get a lot of turnover right away," says Peters. "Maybe it's the stepping stone and they build equity in the home, and then in five to six years, when property values increase, they are able to sell and move into the next level of home. In this case, they will upkeep the home in order to make as much money as possible. People are also buying and staying. There are people who don't want a large house and yard and never will. They are looking to

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start small and stay small. Or there are older people who are looking to downsize; they are looking to benefit from freeing up some income and they will enjoy their smaller home."

The council meeting in early February registered zero objections to the small homes, but Peters says he's seen it before where a developer faces backlash from the existing neighbours for introducing a variance to the original plan. In The Highlands, he says the timing was good and there aren't a lot of neighbours nearby who would object to the changes.

But Peters isn't shy about using his experience from all over southern Manitoba to send a message to dispel prejudice about small homes.

"The people who buy small homes are not bad people. They are not bringing property values down. And just because it's new to your perception of housing doesn't mean it's a new idea to residential development and doesn't mean it's detrimental to a development."

MORE THAN A BEDROOM COMMUNITY

There are many different approaches to community building. In Niverville and other surrounding municipalities, it's been shown that a variety in sizes and types of housing create a net positive for the community, both in property value and social health.

As a past chair of the Economic Developers Association of Manitoba, Marilyn

Crewe is an expert in community development and currently works as the economic development officer for the town of Neepawa.

Like Niverville, Neepawa recently saw a period of intense growth with housing going up 27 percent from the previous year. Neepawa's community vision includes housing for persons and families from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

"We need to be careful, because there is no cookie-cutter solution," says Crewe. "Every community's housing will grow to what the community needs. To assume every community needs five percent seniors housing, ten percent low-income housing, etc... there is no exact formula. Having said that, multiple levels of affordability and multiple styles of homes should be addressed at the planning stage to ensure a community does have a good mix, unless you only want upscale, single-family homes on large lots, and that then could be a strategy for a community. But then you would only attract what would amount to be a bedroom community to Winnipeg."

Crewe points out that if you want to be more than a bedroom community, variety is needed. Having a variety of housing types means your community can grow without relying on a nearby city for social supports, education, medical services, and recreation.

"If we want families to come, to stay, to live, to grow,

and to age into care, we have to have variety," she says. "If we want a diverse community, we have to have diverse housing. It is that simple."

THE GOAL: ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

According to Niverville mayor Myron Dyck, the town's goal is to try to be more inclusive. When council conducts its planning, they tend to focus on the economic diversity of the general population as being a positive.

"If a community is truly to be a community, one should have housing to meet all, or as many as possible, of people's needs and wants," Mayor Dyck says. "If we can offer choice, where the buyer maybe wants to downsize, or a buyer simply does not want or need a large place to live but instead wants a detached home rather than a condo or attached home like a duplex or townhome, we want to provide that whether it's a matter of affordability or preference."

He also says that the types of builds are up to the developers they're in contact with, and for business reasons developers are looking for what they know they are able to sell.

"If a developer does not see a profit in certain types of housing, they will not build it," Mayor Dyck adds. "Council can encourage certain types of housing and press for the social good, but at the end of the day a developer is a business."

The role of government, he says, is merely to offer a

measure of guidance through zoning bylaws, determining a minimum house size and lot size.

Peters from Sunset Estates says that he sees both the social and commercial benefit when a community is developed with an eye toward economic diversity.

"You can't, or shouldn't, build a development that just caters towards one income bracket," Peters says. "If you did, it would be a disaster. A good community is a mix, with a bit of everything. That's a thriving community. You need different types of people. Homogenous people groups aren't good. Not everybody is the same and not everybody can afford the same... And if you just make a development for one type of people with one type of house, you're not going to sell all the houses. You're only going to sell a fraction of the lots. Nobody likes an empty development. Affordability at all levels is what works."

DETAILS AND TIMELINE

The lots for these new small homes are currently being serviced at the far southeast corner of The Highlands along Murcar Street.

The smallest floor plan includes 675 square feet on the main floor with a fully finished basement, meaning there will be more than 1,300 square feet of total living space, in addition to a garage.

Prices have yet to be determined, but the builds are projected to start somewhere around July 2021.

CITIZEN POLL

What price point do you think is most needed for homes in your community right now?

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51%

If you're a lower income family, you're shackled to the fossil fuel industry. The sticker price for even a base model Tesla is a deterrent for most families. If you're fortunate enough to be a high income earner and can comfortably drop \$85K on a base model, you're generally viewed as elitist, and not a steward of the environment. Until electric becomes commonplace and the new, shiny appeal of the technology fades, we probably won't see many on the road for another decade or more. I think current owners will continue with their show and tell presentations to neighbours and friends about their "new toy" and the rest of us will be resigned to domestic brands, and if we're lucky, they'll carry a working "Eco" fuel function. Automakers need to make electric cars affordable for all consumers in order for the buy-in, and most automakers aren't giving up on the tried and true gasoline/Diesel engine.

I'm fairly certain that by the time I can afford an electric vehicle, I'll be an old lady who shouldn't be on the road!

The town could be using this money for way more important things.

We all have a responsibility to make changes to address global warming. But, so do manufacturers, and prices need to come down on electric vehicles. As well more needs to be done to discourage fossil fuel use.

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The Niverville Chamber of Commerce had such a positive response from The 12 Days of Christmas contest that we decided to go even bigger and better for March!

Niverville Chamber of Commerce presents:

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Purchase any goods or any services from a Niverville business between March 15-20 and enter your receipts to win a \$100 gift card from a Niverville merchant. A total of \$8,500 in gift cards from local Niverville merchants will be awarded in the following manner:

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 15th

(deadline to enter 11:59 PM) – 3 x \$100 gift cards will be drawn on Tuesday, March 16 morning

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 16th

(deadline to enter 11:59 PM) – 5 x \$100 gift cards will be drawn on Wednesday March 17 morning

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 17th

(deadline to enter 11:59 PM) – 10 x \$100 gift cards will be drawn on Thursday March 18 morning
(Happy St. Patrick's Day!!)

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 18th

(deadline to enter 11:59 PM) – 15 x \$100 gift cards will be drawn on Friday March 19 morning

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 19th

(deadline to enter 11:59 PM) – 20 x \$100 gift cards will be drawn on Saturday March 20 morning

Purchase and e-mail receipts from March 20th

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Simply e-mail your receipt/proof of purchase along with your name to nivervilleluckofthelocals@gmail.com. You will receive 1 entry for every \$20 spent (under \$20 will eligible for one entry).

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Full contest rules can be found on www.niverville.com

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A Bike for Braelynn: You Can Help Make a Girl's Dream Come True

By Jennifer Lavin

Braelynn Bodman has never been able to stand or walk on her own, but now she has a chance to take bike rides with her mom and dad—and you can help make that happen.

At 14 months old, Braelynn was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). This means she's missing the gene that makes a protein that would allow her to voluntarily move her muscles. Because her body doesn't produce this protein, the muscles slowly atrophy.

Children with SMA continue to progressively get weaker as they get older and can lose their ability to move, eat, and breathe over time.

Braelynn's parents, Maylia and Ryan Bodman of Niverville, were able to get her into a clinical trial in Chicago in 2018. So far the treatment she received there has stopped the progression of her disease.

But Braelynn's day-to-day life can be challenging.

"Braelynn's life is full of medical appointments, daily physical therapy, braces she has to wear, and equipment, like special seating, her wheelchair, and a respiratory machine she uses to strengthen her lungs and support her chest wall," says Maylia. "Daily life has its extra challenges, as she is dependent on us for most things like eating, getting dressed, and even playing with toys. However, she is like any other kid and was attending daycare before COVID-19 happened. She will start Kindergarten this September, has friends she likes to play with, and is really into rainbows, unicorns, and the colour pink. She loves family movie nights with popcorn, and would love to have a bike and go for bike rides!"

Braelynn needs a bike that offers full trunk and head support, and these types of bikes can cost up to \$10,000, a price that is well outside the budget of most average families.

But Maylia found a contest called the Great Bike Giveaway, which is going to award these adapted bikes to children who cannot ride conventional bikes because of a disability. Once she learned of the contest, she entered



Braelynn Bodman is hoping one day for a bike of her own.

MAYLIA AND RYAN BODMAN

Braelynn.

"You choose the bike that would be best suited for your child's needs and people can vote for your child," Maylia explains. "If your child gets the most votes in the bike category they're in, then they win the bike. They also give away some bikes by random draw and have set it up so families can also fundraise for the bike at a discounted price if their child doesn't happen to win by votes or through the random draw. Voting ends on March 10 and the fundraising portion ends March 24. If you win by votes or by the random draw, then any amounts people have donated toward your child's campaign will go towards another child getting their bike!"

The bike the Bodmans have chosen is called the Tandem Duet. It has special seating in the front that can also be detached and used as a wheelchair. Braelynn would

have a great view sitting in the front while Maylia or Ryan pedal the bike.

"Having this special bike would be amazing for our family," Maylia continues. "Since Braelynn's diagnosis, we have always been determined to give her the same experiences as other children and find ways to adapt things for her needs. Recreation activities can be particularly challenging, though, even though we do our best to be creative. We love to be outside together as a family and often go for walks with Braelynn in her powerchair, or we play powerchair soccer on the driveway. But a bike ride is not something we can do without an adapted bike."

Braelynn has often commented that she wishes she had a bike when she sees other kids on theirs, and last Christmas she was disappointed when she didn't get one.

"As parents seeing their

child go through so many things a child shouldn't have to go through, it would mean the world to take her on bike rides, give her that classic childhood experience and just let her be a kid and have some fun."

If you'd like to help get Braelynn her special bike, you can visit the Great Bike Giveaway website (see below) to vote for her.

A final note from the Bodman family: "From the bottom of hearts, thank you to everyone taking the time to vote and help us to get this bike for Braelynn. We are so grateful for this community's support!"

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To vote for Braelynn or make a donation, visit the Great Bike Giveaway website: www.greatbikegiveaway.com/ABikeforBraelynn

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Local Woman, Oncologists Warn of Delayed Cancer Diagnoses

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Few events of the last century have shaken us from our comfortable lives the way the COVID pandemic has. Between government lockdowns and, for many, the paralysis of fear, normal life has been put on indefinite hold.

In February, to mark National Cancer Prevention month, pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, along with eight global coalition partners, unveiled a new campaign to raise global awareness and create a pathway for people to get back to standard cancer care services.

In Canada, the campaign is supported by cancer researchers and oncologists from more than two dozen healthcare organizations.

"When the pandemic began, our healthcare system went into acute crisis response in order to limit COVID-19 transmission, but the ripple effect it has had on cancer care is alarming, and we are already seeing the profound impact," says Dr. Shady Ashamalla, a surgical oncologist and assistant professor at the University of Toronto. "Delays in diagnostics, evaluation, and treatment can lead to more advanced cancers, limited therapeutic options, and access to clinical trials, and ultimately lead to poor patient outcomes. That is why it is absolutely critical that patients don't wait. We are urging those with cancer or possible cancer symptoms, or even routine screenings, to re-engage with their healthcare team for the care they need."

It's estimated that approximately 225,000 Canadians would have been diagnosed with cancer in 2020, were it not for the pandemic. Looking back now, we can see that the actual number of diagnoses was significantly lower than that.

Many healthcare professionals believe that the pandemic is directly responsible, and they're warning that the prevalence of cancer isn't any lower despite the lower number of official diagnoses. In many cases, cancer just isn't being caught in time.

"In recent months, I have had patients whom I have advised to seek urgent medical attention at the emergency department due to cancer symptoms or side effects from their treatment, but they have expressed extreme reluctance to do so due to concerns about being exposed to COVID-19," says Dr. Winson Cheung, a prominent



Amanda Pelletier of Niverville is fighting cancer right in the midst of a global pandemic.

AMANDA PELLETIER

oncologist and the principal director of an organization called Oncology Outcomes. "Prior to the pandemic, there would be no hesitation to seek care at the hospital. I can empathize with their anxiety, but not going to the hospital when medically needed can result in serious health consequences."

According to recent data, it is estimated that the number of newly diagnosed cancer cases over a three-month period in 2020 was down by 16 percent compared to 2019. Bladder and ovarian cancer diagnoses may be down by as much as 25 percent. Breast, prostate, lung, and colorectal cancer diagnoses are estimated to be down between 12 to 19 percent.

At the same time, some oncologists across the nation are reporting up to a five percent increase in late-stage diagnoses compared to 2019, suggesting that some cancer cases are being allowed to progress too far.

"These numbers are preliminary estimates and, as more data is gathered, it could be much higher in the near future if we do not reverse this trend," Dr. Cheung says. "It also takes time for the healthcare system to see the true impact of COVID-19, so we may see more poor outcomes in another year. To intervene at that point is often too late and it means many more patients would suffer. This is what we are trying to prevent and why it is so important for Canadians to understand the impact of a delayed cancer diagnosis."

He adds that hospitals and cancer

care clinics have worked hard over the past months to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission through vigilant cleaning and monitoring, reducing waiting room capacities, and by ensuring that masks are worn by staff, visitors, and patients alike.

As well, Dr. Cheung adds that many healthcare professionals have learned to incorporate virtual care through online appointments, further reducing their patients' risk of exposure.

A LOCAL DIAGNOSIS

Angela Pelletier of Niverville understands the anxiety that comes with facing cancer treatment during a pandemic.

Pelletier was at work the day she received the fateful call from her doctor in November 2019. At just 38 years of age, she'd been diagnosed with bladder cancer. She immediately went home to break the news to her husband, Nicholas.

"My husband was in shock," Pelletier says. "Tears and hugs followed the news. I had to take care of him the first few days, but as the days unfolded and a plan was put in place, it did get easier. I had to remind him sometimes to take it day by day as his mind went to the future and the what-ifs. But with cancer, you cannot think that way. Facing each day with positivity and strength is all you can do and is the only thing you can really be in control of."

Pelletier's cancer treatments began in January 2020 with the surgical removal of tumours from

her bladder. Family members were encouraged to accompany her for support at her appointments.

In April, as the province went into an aggressive pandemic response, Pelletier began a series of weekly BCG treatments, an immunotherapeutic approach used to treat early-stage bladder cancer. Over the course of two and a half hours, a drug was administered directly into her bladder.

From this point on in her cancer journey, Pelletier was required to attend appointments alone.

Over the course of the coming months, Pelletier also underwent numerous cystoscopies, biopsies, and CT scans. She also faced a total of four more surgeries.

"Even when the province went into lockdown and surgeries were being cancelled, I was never sidelined and my health was made a priority," Pelletier marvels. "I received wonderful care from Open Health Niverville all the way to my healthcare team at Cancer Care Manitoba. I believe that my high-grade aggressive tumours and my young age may have contributed to this."

Ferg Devins, chairperson of Bladder Cancer Canada, says that the experience of cancer patients across Canada may have varied during 2020, depending on how well each treatment centre was able to adapt to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

Devins adds, however, that he is unaware of any patient who was

denied treatment for acute cancer.

For Pelletier, only one kidney scan had to be temporarily postponed during the spring lockdown period.

"Cancer is very scary," Pelletier says. "Although COVID can be scary as well, having cancer far outweighed the risks of getting COVID. I followed all the precautions. I wear my mask, practice excellent hand hygiene, and everything that comes into my house gets properly sanitized before being put away. We are not taking chances."

OUTCOME COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE

What Pelletier is sorry to lose out on are the emotional and social supports typically available to cancer patients in Manitoba.

"When I was first diagnosed, I was told there are support groups, including yoga and other programs to help cancer patients keep up their quality of life," says Pelletier. "Unfortunately, this type of care did get cancelled. While online programs were put in place and more virtual programs were created, it really isn't quite the same as having those face-to-face connections. But this is the world we live in now and safety is the first priority."

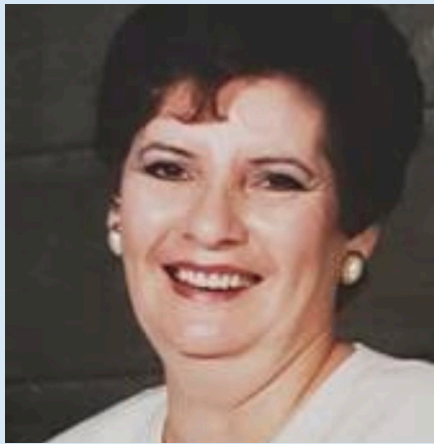
More than a year after her diagnosis, Pelletier's cancer journey is far from over. The early treatments proved ineffective and the cancer advanced into the muscle of her bladder.

Currently undergoing chemotherapy, Pelletier will soon be faced with additional surgeries to remove her bladder, uterus, urethra, and a number of lymph nodes. At that point, surgeons will redirect her urinary system to a urostomy pouch worn outside of her abdomen.

Based on her own experience, Pelletier strongly encourages people not to let COVID-19 stand in the way of getting an early diagnosis and care.

"It is very important to pay attention to any changes in your body," Pelletier says. "I encourage everyone to see their doctor regularly and build a relationship. I was very fortunate to have a great healthcare team that sent me for the appropriate tests to find my cancer at an early stage. Even though it has been a challenging journey, the outcome could have been far worse if I didn't have an open relationship with my physicians."

IN BRIEF



An Appreciation of Cecile DeLaurier

By Jennifer Lavin

Cecile DeLaurier didn't always have an easy life, but you would have never known that when speaking with her. She lost her husband in 2004 but didn't let grief from that loss take away from her loving personality.

She was a regular participant in St. Adolphe Bingo Night and volunteered at the MCC Thrift Store in Niverville, one of the places where she felt most at home. She was beloved by her fellow volunteers and was often sought out by customers.

According to Gerald Loeppky, manager of the thrift store, a chat with Cecile was always a jovial occasion.

"[The staff] became a support for her, and she rewarded us with hard work, humour, friendship, and grace," Loeppky says.

The temporary closure of the thrift store due to COVID-19 was hard on Cecile, as she missed friends and the feeling of belonging she got from working there—and unfortunately, in November, she caught the virus and had to be admitted to the hospital.

On December 2, the virus claimed her life.

Loeppky says the volunteers and staff grieve her loss terribly and they are saddened to know that had to leave this earth alone.

"Cecile was a person filled with much love," Loeppky adds. "She had a strong hope for a better life and future for everyone and extended grace and forgiveness easily. She was full of life and brought joy and peace wherever she could."

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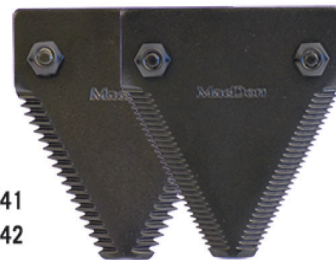
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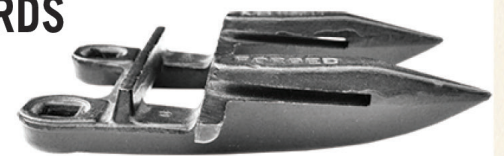
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Planning is in full swing for Niverville's Spring Break Camps!
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Every Child Deserves a Birthday to Remember

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

A woman from Niverville wants to help ensure that every child in Niverville has a birthday to remember, regardless of their family's circumstances.

To make sure that happens, Nicole Savard is reaching out to her fellow townspeople and asking for some help to get her project off the ground.

"Over the Christmas break, I started to wonder how children feel when they don't have any celebration and how birthdays can be financially difficult, if not impossible, for some parents or guardians," Savard says.

This prompted her to start a brand-new initiative aimed at making sure that all children in her community have the chance to enjoy their special day.

"We have such a loving and very generous community, which made me believe that if I could tap into that love and generosity, then children and their families could have a special birthday celebration," she adds.

Savard's plan is to help provide any parent with a child turning 17 or younger with several items to make their birthday one to remember: two gifts, a cake, a balloon bouquet, and paper plates and napkins if needed.

The parent or guardian doesn't have to explain their circumstances and Savard will not reveal their identity to anyone.

She hopes to create a database of donors through which she can rotate. That way, every time a birthday request comes in, she can go to the next people on her list and ask for their help.

Savard also hopes to eventually create a small committee so that if she's ever unable to organize an event, there will be other people



Nicole Savard of Niverville.

✉ NICOLE SAVARD

available to step up. After all, as the saying goes, it takes a village.

There are already several donors lined up to help.

A few bakers in town have volunteered to make cakes when needed and Pizza 311 has generously offered to provide a gift card to add to each child's gift.

Now Savard needs help to keep this plan in motion.

She's aiming to have members of the community, or business owners, commit to buying a gift or balloon bouquet.

Alternatively, she would also

gratefully accept monetary donations so she can purchase those items herself.

"I know how special birthdays are," Savard says. "They should be something to look forward to."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ If you are interested in helping with this new birthday celebration initiative, or if you would like to anonymously request a birthday celebration for your child, you are invited to email Nicole Savard at nicolesavard77@hotmail.com.

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Health & Wellness

Reclaiming Wellness

As the pandemic eases, it's time to course-correct from some destructive habits we've embraced during our year of isolation.

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

This past month marked—certainly not celebrated—a major milestone: the arrival of COVID-19 in North America.

The pandemic has changed our daily routines in many ways, or at very least has impacted the way we see the world and how we operate in it.

Many of us are still spending more time at home than ever before, which has produced new challenges to our overall physical and mental health.

Although these personal sacrifices have helped bend the curve, they've also led, in many cases, to destructive habits.

For example, social distancing and self-isolation has led to a rise in the use of alcohol and junk food to self-soothe.

Physical fitness was already tough to prioritize before COVID, but embracing a sedentary lifestyle has taken a toll.

Now that so many of us work, eat meals, socialize, and entertain ourselves exclusively at home, whether by requirement or choice, our step counts are down.

And so may be our moods.

This month, we've asked a few



Locals Madisson Stott, Elizabeth Stott, and Aurelie Kilsdonk training at ShopGym, which is open again at 25 percent capacity. **CRYSTAL STOTT**

local health practitioners to paint a picture of how we're doing as we head into the second year of dealing with COVID.

Think of it as a metaphorical peek into the medicine cabinet of your neighbours, helping to normalize and inform how we're cobbling together our respective coping strategies.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Crystal Stott of Niverville's ShopGym Inc. says that the number one thing people are struggling with is their mental health.

"I think most people have felt anxious, depressed, or just blah at some point in the past year," Stott says. "The isolation, lack of routine, and

limited or no access to normal stress relievers have really taken its toll on people. I have spoken with numerous people who have mentioned that initially not having winter sports season for their children to participate in was disheartening."

As a functional strength coach and a nutrition coach, Stott has a special focus on hormone health.

She says that she's noticed many people are lacking sleep.

"When your routine is disrupted for extended periods of time, it is very difficult to stay on track with the things that help you stay mentally healthy," she continues. "Sleep and nutrition top the list when we're discussing wellness. Sleep is vital for recovery, so practicing good sleep hygiene is number one. People who follow a regular sleep routine typically handle stress better."

As the shock and newness of living with pandemic restrictions has worn off, Stott points out that some positive mental health outcomes have already started re-emerging for people in our little corner of the world.

"For a lot of people who were working long hours, stressed out, commuting, running their family members to activities, this year has given people 'permission' to step back, spend more time with loved ones, perhaps consume less materially, and just breathe," says Stott. "So many people have started new hobbies or learned new things that add value to their life in more ways than monetarily and that mind shift is one positive thing I hope will stay with us."

Heather McLeod is a chiropractor

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at Niverville Family Chiropractic, which has served the community for 14 years.

She also agrees that the mental and emotional stress of the pandemic remains evident.

In her office, she sees the main challenge is the new work-from-home restrictions.

"Not having an ergonomically configured workspace—such as an adjustable office desk, computer, and chair—is starting to create chronic pain challenges for some patients," says McLeod.

McLeod has also observed the consequences of people who obey the restrictions to the point of being leery about making necessary health-related appointments.

"I think there is a portion of the population who are very stressed about catching COVID or struggling with economic concerns," she adds. "There are several folks I have not seen for over a year and I am concerned about how it is mentally affecting them. We encourage people to follow the public health guidelines to keep themselves and loved ones safe, but we also encourage them to take responsibility for their health."

Lisa Desaulniers has been a licensed massage therapist with FOGAmotion in Niverville for the past eight years and she agrees with McLeod about seeing a recent uptick in neck, shoulder, and back pain due to poor ergonomics in makeshift home offices.

Desaulniers also says she's seen recurring headaches, which could be related to the necessity of wearing masks for long periods of time.

"First, I'm seeing more jaw dysfunction," says Desaulniers. "If the mask isn't fitted properly, we tend to push it away from our mouth with

our bottom jaw. This causes jaw tension to increase, as we don't normally do this action. Second, when we're talking a lot, the mask will suck onto the mouth, creating a vacuum effect. This sudden pressure increase on the lungs and neck, as well as sinuses and face, can lead to headaches. So be sure to wear a mask that's properly fitted to your face."

Besides physical struggles, Desaulniers adds her voice to those who are expressing concern about our local mental health.

"I've heard numerous complaints about rising depression and anxiety in children, and growing concerns about increasing suicide rates," she adds. "We knew these things were a problem before, but they seem to be getting worse with isolation."

WHAT CAN WE BE DOING?

The evidence is clear that proper nutrition and adequate exercise will provide benefits for both physical and mental health, which are intrinsically linked.

Brain chemicals play an important part in regulating your mood and nutrient-dense foods provide us with everything we need to deal with stress by keeping the hormones in balance and allowing the body to function optimally.

While this is going on, physical activity stimulates the release of dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, thus improving one's mental health.

In our province, there are many resources available to address mental health, but Stott emphasizes that it's the everyday things that are most important in maintaining wellness.

"Keeping to a routine in general helps maintain balance," Stott says. "Getting outside for a walk to soak up the sunshine is an instant mood improver. Eating nutrient-dense foods 80 percent of the time sets you up for physical wellness, but still allows room to treat yourself. I also find that encouraging people to do something for others—volunteering, random acts of kindness, etc.—goes a long way to help boost spirits. Adding 15 minutes of quiet time to your day in devotions, meditation, breathing, or reflection can keep you centred and help counteract stress naturally."

McLeod advises anyone struggling with chronic pain related to increased screen use to take frequent breaks and make the conscious decision to reduce unnecessary screen time.

"Going offline by spending less time on your devices, especially social media, is helpful," says McLeod.

The spine specialist also supports reducing pain and boosting your immune system through diet and exercise.

"Physical and mental health are very entwined," McLeod adds. "It's impossible to separate them. The healthier your immune system is, the stronger you would be if you happen to catch any virus. Doing things like getting enough rest, exercising regularly, minimizing or eliminating alcohol, and smoking, eating healthy, and having tools in place to deal with mental and emotional stress are all important."

She agrees with Stott about adding meditation and also suggests intentionally reaching out to mental

(continued on page 16)

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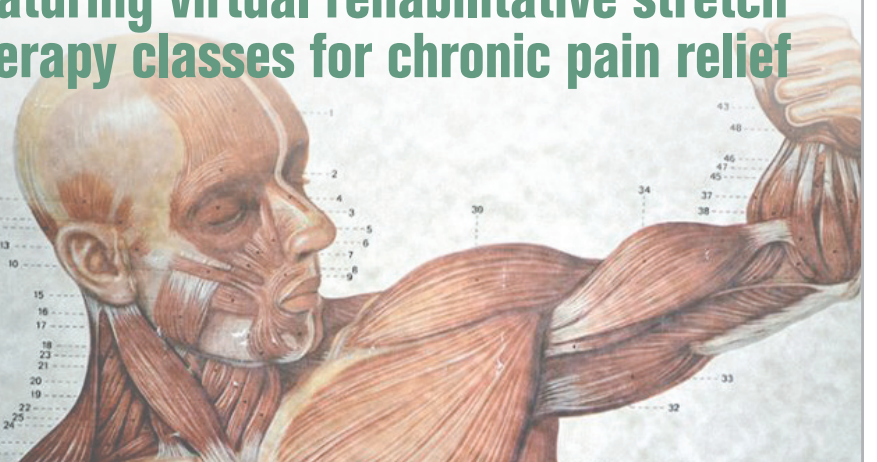
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(continued from page 15)

health professionals when it becomes necessary.

"Although mental health is not a professional area of specialty for me, some basic suggestions I have to improve mental health are meditation, prayer, or developing a breathing exercise routine," she says. "Spending quiet time, looking inward, and working on becoming grounded can help. If you're suffering with mental health challenges, speaking to your support system—doctor, church, family, whatever it might look like for you—is very important!"

Desaulniers often focuses on the importance of taking positive steps to improve one's outlook on life.

"It is personal growth that makes life easier," Desaulniers says. "Most people spend their energy worrying or being angry about things, rather than discovering new ways to approach them. There are tons of resources out there that will give you tools to use and inspire you to change. There are no rules on where to start. It just takes an open mind and a desire to learn and grow."

Desaulniers adds that in March she will be starting a book club for anyone interested in starting a wellness journey.

And when restrictions allow, she would suggest that people look into group classes that have discussions to increase our interpersonal connections.

HOW WILL WE START THRIVING AGAIN?

While checking in with families whose children were missing out on extracurriculars and sports, Stott discovered that they reported spending increased family time together.

She noted that this change goes deep.

In other words, it's about more than just finding convenient ways to spend time with the people closest to us in proximity.

"Yes, the natural pivot was to spend more time as a family doing indoor and outdoor activities, and they have made so many memories this year that they will cherish," says Stott. "But it is in trying to find the positives in a situation that goes a long way toward building resilience."

Stott urges us to reflect on history, which shows us how resilient human beings are. We have adapted throughout

health and wellness, I believe that when you are successful at maintaining healthy habits that support you, it breeds confidence in yourself."

As for Desaulniers, she points out the benefits of simple exercise, like taking a daily walk, making healthier food choices, and taking it one day at a time.

"To change our health, we have to be willing to change who we are," she says. "Realize that things and people can't make us happy. They only contribute to momentary happiness. The good news is you don't have to wait. You can start that journey now by exploring what you already know about personal growth, and keeping an open mind. Have discussions and follow your own path from there. There's no right or wrong way, and it's a great way to stimulate positive energy flow for healing."

Of course, it doesn't take a pandemic to give human beings something to complain about.

Desaulniers says you can actually train your body to be resilient to disease by maintaining a healthy lifestyle while still finding something to complain about even in the best of times.

"Gratitude builds resilience by bringing you back to the present moment. It softens your perspective of current life struggles," says Desaulniers. "And look to the future optimistically. If you find that difficult, stay in the present moment and be grateful for what you do have. Of course we all miss seeing friends and family, but technology has been a blessing with video communication, and now we have the options to connect outside. This winter has been especially gorgeous, too. A couple of cold weeks is nothing to complain about, and spring is on the way."

"Realize that things and people can't make us happy. They only contribute to momentary happiness."

Lisa Desaulniers | Massage Therapist

history, and we continue to adapt.

"COVID-19 has been the biggest challenge a lot of people have faced in their lifetime, and we're learning new things about ourselves daily," she says. "Eating well and exercising daily will definitely help people manage the stress this situation brings. It brings some sense of having control in a situation that is beyond our control. By looking after ourselves physically and being conscious of our mindset daily, we are building resilience both physically and mentally."

McLeod says that positive thinking and maintaining healthy habits pay off in the form of confidence.

"You see that you are strong and you can do what you set your mind to," McLeod says. "These are definitely challenging times for everyone. What you do to support yourself and your circle of family and friends really matters. As for resiliency with regards to our



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Commentary

Stuck in the Middle with You: The Effect of Lockdowns on Relationships

By Daniel Dacombe

In the last year, a lot has changed. The transition from our pre-COVID to COVID lives was sudden and jarring, as the flu we'd been hearing about on the news overseas suddenly arrived on our own doorsteps. We have begun to adjust... somewhat.

But for many of us, a year of varying degrees of lockdown also means we've been in the presence of our romantic partners more than ever before. You know the old saying that says "familiarity breeds contempt"? Well, it's starting to make an awful lot of sense.

For adults who live with their partners, we're used to spending most of our time apart. We depart for work in the morning, we come home in the evening, and we're granted a welcome respite together on the weekend. Even if only one partner typically leaves for work, we're most often out of contact for most of the day. We also tend to have lives outside the home.

To put it simply, it's normal not to spend every waking moment with your romantic partner. And it's normal not to necessarily want to.

Now, though? Many of us not only spend all day at home, but virtually all our free time as well. Movie theatres are closed, shopping has been sharply curtailed, gyms have until recently been off-limits, and even visiting with friends has been a rare occurrence.

The relational toll of all this togetherness has been noteworthy. One website that provides legal documentation reported a 34 percent increase in requests for divorce papers during the lockdown.

If you chose to read this article, hearing about that increase might make a great deal of sense to you. Many people have started to ask, is



being together all the time actually bad for us? Is it causing us to have more fights than before? Or has the lockdown just shown us that we've been broken all along and just didn't realize it?

Such questions have been anticipated by professionals in the field of psychology. Early in the pandemic, an article was published in the journal *American Psychologist* detailing the expected struggle for romantic partners. War, natural disasters, and other external stressors have been shown to affect the quality and stability of romantic relationships—that is, couples tend to become more withdrawn, unsupportive, and hostile. These issues are often exacerbated by financial stress, health concerns, and underlying physical and mental health issues... all of which have increased sharply in the last year.

However, it would be wrong to conclude that the pandemic has ruined healthy relationships to a

significant extent. The increase in divorces may not be a sign of good relationships turning bad; it may actually be a sign of previously troubled relationships reaching a breaking point more quickly.

What about couples who had healthy and supportive relationships prior to the pandemic? In that regard, research shows us that our romantic relationships also have the ability to get us through this stressful time.

Austrian psychologists conducted a study early in their country's lockdown and found that healthy and supportive relationships were a protective factor for people's mental health.

By contrast, unhealthy relationships were found to contribute to significantly higher rates of mental health issues. According to their research, during the pandemic single people fared better (in terms of their mental health) than people in

unhappy or unhealthy relationships.

Another study found that couples who used the additional time afforded to them to invest in their relationship have tended to support each other.

The implications are clear: if we want our relationships to survive this global pandemic, we need to take the time and energy to invest in them.

(We also need to take a moment to acknowledge that while many otherwise positive relationships have been struggling throughout the pandemic, there are also relationships in which violence is a factor—and these relationships have likewise been impacted by COVID-19. Many individuals have been forced to spend more time than usual at home with a violent partner, and because of that their exposure to violence has likewise increased. Numerous media outlets have reported double or triple the average number of calls to intimate partner violence hotlines

during the lockdown, and homicides against women by intimate partners has doubled in some areas. These issues are significant and must be dealt with appropriately. In these situations, regular relationship interventions are unlikely to succeed.)

One such source of information about improving relationship health is the Gottman Institute. Founded by married psychologists Drs. John and Julie Gottman, the Gottman Institute is the world's foremost source of research on marriage and relationships.

The Gottman Institute has published resources for couples during COVID-19, including articles on communication and on "stay-at-home dates," as well as many other books, articles, and supports designed for couples both healthy and struggling. There is also the option of seeing a marriage counselor, which we can accomplish thanks to the advent of videoconferencing.

One of the leading causes of divorce, even when we aren't living during a global pandemic, is waiting too long to start working on the problems that exist in a relationship. Early is the best time to start working on issues that crop up, before they begin to impact our mental health. If you wait too long, it could cost you the relationship—or perhaps worse, the pandemic might end and the problems in our relationships might go back into hiding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ If you'd like information on strengthening your relationship both inside and outside a pandemic, consider checking out the Gottman Institute or contact a local marriage counsellor today. And if you or someone you know is experiencing intimate partner violence, please contact 1-877-977-0007 for confidential help.



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Sports & Recreation



Anytime Fitness Niverville (Finally) Opens Its Doors

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Like all gyms in Manitoba, the new Anytime Fitness location in Niverville was forced to close its doors late last year—in their case, before they'd even had a chance to open them. The facility had been slated to open in November, a plan which necessarily had to be put on hold owing to the pandemic.

The long delay is now over. On Saturday, February 13, members were let inside the brand-new facility

for the first time.

The opening was made possible by changes to the province's public health orders, which allowed gyms, fitness centres, and yoga studios to reopen at 25 percent capacity.

Nathan Dyck, one of the owners of the local Anytime Fitness franchise, says that the months-long wait had been difficult, to say the least.

"It has been challenging," Dyck says. "However, we know Niverville is ready for a fitness centre that provides the level of service and quality that we are bringing."

To access the gym, members need to strictly adhere to the rules. This includes using the gym's reservation system, wearing a face masks at all times, practicing social distancing, and staying home when not feeling well.

Dyck wants to assure the community that the gym is safe and that they're following the government's lead on health and safety, but also that they've had stringent cleaning measures in place all along.

"In addition to the government-mandated regulations, we

have always practiced industry best cleaning standards," he says. "Of course, indoor footwear and gym attire guidelines are all there, but we have been using medical disinfectant wipes for our equipment for over eight years, long before COVID. We have regimented daily, hourly, weekly, and even deep-cleaning schedules. We take health seriously."

If you're interested in joining the gym, Dyck says now is a good time to check them out. They are offering a "Join for \$1" promotion which includes a 30-day starting workout

program as well as a fitness consultation with a personal trainer.

"We have been very pleased with the response we have received from Niverville," Dyck adds. "We are a perfect avenue for individuals who have suffered, as so many have, from the mental and physical health challenges that we have faced in the last year. Our state-of-the-art facility and support will be very refreshing for many. We are excited to be a part of the health and wellbeing of the community for years to come."



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ENTERING IN

He was seventeen when Nancy's dad left the small west coast farm to enlist for the war. Adventure and the sense that "it was the right thing to do" found him on a supply ship, and eventually a Corvette patrolling the waters of the great Atlantic. Leaving behind his sisters and widowed mother, he never anticipated what he was about to experience. The exposure for a then young boy was overwhelming as he witnessed things that the innocence of youth should never see. He talked about it when you asked him, but he seemed to pull back when the dreads of war got too vivid. Maybe when he exposed his heart and deep emotion, he risked that others may not fully appreciate that depth of trauma and pain. How could anyone fully appreciate it unless they were there? He came to visit us in Calgary for a couple of weeks and one evening we took him to visit an elderly friend for tea. Mrs. Milroy had been a nurse in England during the war and eventually the conversation came around to those times. Within seconds they realized that she had nursed at the same hospital and likely the same floor and ward where he visited his closest comrade who had lost his leg from a mortar blast. Immediately he burst into tears. Finally, someone who could "enter in" and understand the pain and trauma that laid at the depths of his being. Someone who had heard the same sounds and smelled and tasted the same sulphur air. There was something about that evening that made us increasingly thankful for those who risked and lost lives so that we could know the freedom we enjoy today. It was in later years that Dad travelled to Europe to remember the now famous beaches and hillsides where battles forged freedom for countries and nations. Considering this, my mind cannot help but think of a hill called Calvary where a battle was fought, not for nations and countries, but a battle to free and redeem eternal souls. This was one singular final battle that conquered for all of mankind, the victory that we so desperately needed over sin, hell, and the grave. Christ's cry from that cross, "It is Finished", completed the work necessary to forgive all of mankind's sin and provide a way to eternal life. 1 Peter 2:24 reminds us, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes (wounds) ye were healed." Death by way of a Roman cross was a horrific, torturous death. Romans 5:10 reminds us that when we were his enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. I cannot help but think that God gets great pleasure when we attempt to "enter in" with hearts of gratitude and appreciation, for what his Son, on the cross, accomplished on our behalf. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable (or indescribable gift). 2 Cor 9:15

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IN BRIEF

Snow Maze Opens for the Season

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

For the third winter in a row, A Maze in Corn north of St. Adolphe has unveiled its seasonal snow maze. The maze, which has become a big local attraction since it made its debut in 2018, has been recognized as the world's largest snow maze.

The maze opened February 14.

This year's maze is beautifully designed with wide corridors and a range of snow and ice sculptures to discover, along with other special surprises that visitors will have to discover for themselves.

For the rest of the season, the maze will be open Friday through Monday. Admission is \$15 per person for those 13 or older, and \$13 for those between the ages of four and 12. Children three and under may enter free of charge.

Regular admission includes access to the snow maze as well as Snow Mountain. Luge rides are available for an additional charge.

Due to COVID, there are a few rules in place that everyone needs to follow.

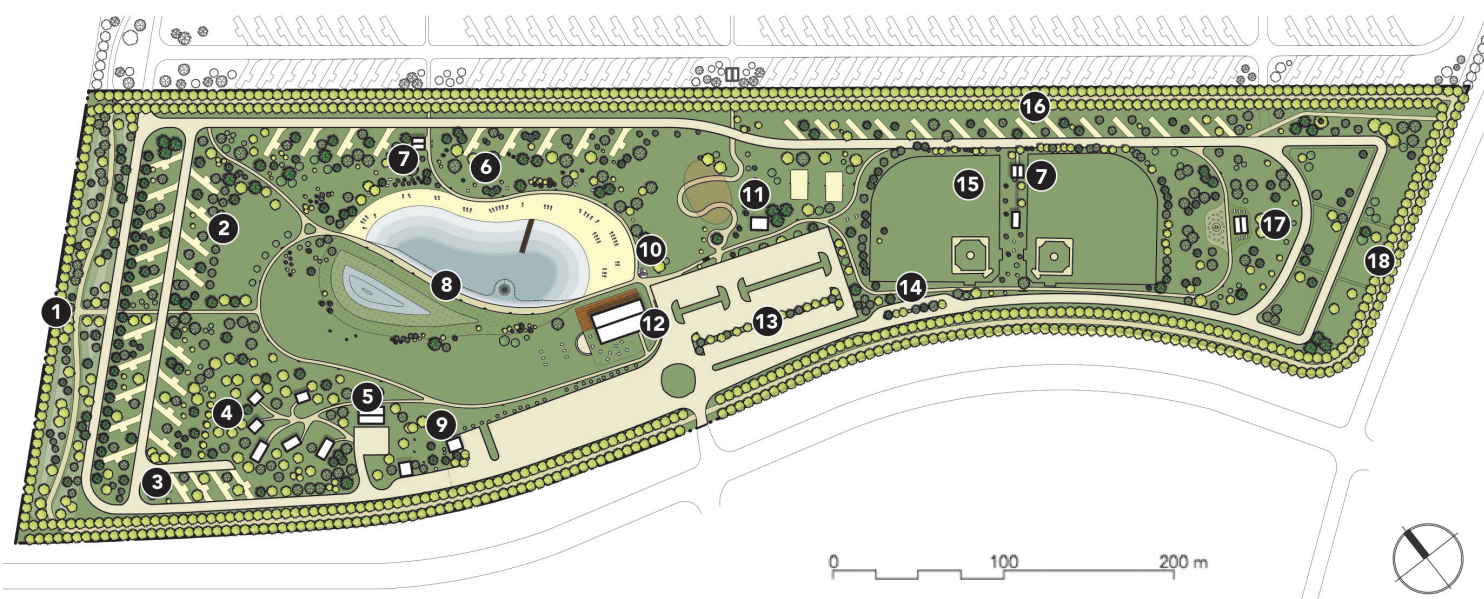
In order to ensure that snow maze doesn't exceed capacity, tickets must be purchased online (www.cornmaze.ca). Each ticket is good for a two-hour timeframe.

Groups must maintain at least two metres of distance between themselves and other groups.

An in-house rule is that groups should stick to the right while walking through the maze—in other words, the same thing you'd do while driving along a highway.

Unfortunately, the indoor warming area and bar will be closed this year, although exceptions will be made for guests to use the washroom.

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Ste. Agathe Park to See Major Expansion

By Jennifer Lavin

Cartier Park in Ste. Agathe is gearing up for a major expansion and rejuvenation in the coming years.

Christie de Rocquigny, a member of the Ste. Agathe Community Development Inc., says that a committee has been formed to spearhead the exciting new initiative.

The park is already a well-used and well-loved feature in Ste. Agathe. According to de Rocquigny, the biggest draw right now is the picnic shelter, which is regularly rented out for family reunions, corporate events, and even weddings. The campsites and ball diamonds are also quite popular, as are the cross-country skiing trails which are kept groomed by the municipality.

None of those features are going anywhere, but the community can look forward to a host of new ones.

Along with its new look, the

park will get a name change. Soon it will be called Cheyenne Park, a name that de Rocquigny says has special relevance to the community.

"Cheyenne Summer Fest is the name of our annual community event, which is held in the park," she says. "The name also refers to the SS Cheyenne, which was a nineteenth-century Red River steamboat, and the boiler from that boat is displayed in town. We also felt that this would help tie in with the boat launch and dock project that is currently underway in town as well."

De Rocquigny says that her committee has been working on the park's master plan for nearly two years. The plan has three goals: to increase usage of the park by the community and visitors, to meet the recreational wants and needs of the community, and to be fiscally sustainable.

There is no set timeline for the project right now, but it will be a

multi-phased plan that plays out over several years. At this time, the committee is establishing what their priorities will be. New bathrooms and showers are already scheduled for 2021, as are some upgrades to the baseball diamonds.

One of the more unique features planned for the park are "glamping" spots. Glamping, or glamorous camping, is a fun trend that may appeal to those who don't have campers or tents. The six glamping spots will be permanent structures, similar to the yurts that can be found in some provincial parks.

According to de Rocquigny, a new water feature may also be in the works.

"Since we moved to Ste. Agathe in 2006, it seemed as though the idea of a water feature was always floating around," she says. "I feel like this might be what everyone is the most excited about."

A beach, a dock, and a fountain

are all part of the master plan, which would provide a venue for naturalized swimming.

Other features which can be seen on the proposed master plan include seasonal RV sites, pull-through sites, a group camping area, a playground, laundry facilities and washrooms, outdoor showers, a three-season event centre, expanded parking, and a BBQ shelter with fire lounge.

The nautically themed playground will include a boat play structure, a rubberized walking path, steppers, a learning wall, swings, and locally sourced boulders and logs.

The next step will be to form a fundraising committee to see what kind of grants and fundraisers are possible to help pave the way forward.

"We have a very supportive community with some of the best volunteers around," adds de Rocquigny. "So anything is possible!"

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Local Arenas Shut Down for the Season

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As we head into the tail end of winter, communities across Manitoba have been faced with the decision of whether to keep their arenas running. Although the province has gradually loosened pandemic restrictions since late January, arenas have remained closed for games and practices.

The only allowance for these facilities has been for them to reopen for individual instruction.

Operating recreation centres like arenas has turned out to be a significant cost for municipalities across Manitoba. A recent report by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) showed that 85 percent of municipalities are facing financial hardships. Additionally, the single biggest financial hit for 71 percent of municipalities has been the closure of community rec centres and the loss of revenue associated with that.

"During the cold stretch, the arena doesn't cost us much in terms of hydro to run," says Eric King, CAO for the Town of Niverville. "As we move into the warmer weather, the decision [is] about turning off the ice plant before our cost to run outweighs any potential benefits."

But the Town of Niverville has decided, for now, to keep the arena running.



Our community arenas have sat empty most of the winter, including the Niverville Arena.

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"The arena will open on Saturday for three weeks, and close by the end of March, depending on weather," King says.

In mid-February, King had pointed out that one consideration in the decision was the productivity of the ice. Although individual instruction was allowed, it would have been a significant cost to the taxpayers to open the building for such a small number of people.

Under the new public health orders, however, practices are allowed.

An even bigger consideration is the weather. Warming temperatures make it difficult to continue operation.

The forecast for the first week of March has daytime highs well above freezing.

"As the facility is older and does not have the same potential to run in warmer

temperature, the building is limited on how long into spring we could run it," King says. "It's a 50-year-old building. Running in heat could damage or overwork the plant or could cause structural issues/humidity issues which would play a role in its future life expectancy. [We want to] extend the asset to get the most out of it at the end of its life."

Other communities have already decided to shut down their ice plants.

Ritchot's arenas, for example, have been shut down for some time. After having funded all operational costs since the restrictions came into effect in November, they decided to pull the plug in the middle of February.

"After the most recent reiteration of public health restrictions, council made the difficult decision to stop

operational funding as of February 17," said Amber Mamchuk, Director of Recreation Services, at that time. "The arenas are in the process of closing down for the season and will not be reopening until the late summer/early fall."

The ice plant at the St. Adolphe Arena had already been shut down, due to a mechanical failure on the brine pump.

"As a result, the chiller and several other pieces of equipment will need to be replaced," Mamchuk says. "We are in the process of an insurance claim to replace the damaged equipment. The limiting factor is a turnaround time of eight to ten weeks for chillers. Once the equipment has been installed, the arena will be up and running again, hopefully by the fall."

IN BRIEF

Run-and-Gun Style Suits the Jets

By Dan Hoeppner

Hockey fans across the country have described the new all-Canadian division in many ways. It's often referred to as a run-and-gun style of hockey, with less defensive structure and quick-strike offensive talent.

This is largely a factor of it having the top three goal scorers in the league: Austin Matthews (Toronto) with 18 goals, Connor McDavid (Edmonton) with 14 goals, and Brock Boeser (Vancouver) with 12 goals. It also features six of the top-ten goal scorers in the league, including the Jets' own Mark Scheifele and Nikolaj Ehlers with 11 goals each.

The North Division leads the NHL in goals per game.

This style of game seems to suit the Jets. They rank third at the moment with 27 points and have earned 68 percent of the points available to them so far in the season, which ranks second in the division and seventh in the league overall.

If you compare this season to the first 20 games of last season, the Jets have earned more points (plus four), scored more goals (plus sixteen), improved their powerplay (plus seven percent), and improved their penalty kill (plus eight percent).

Nikolaj Ehlers is small, fast, and explosive—and he's a benefactor of the division realignment. He's been given more time and space to navigate through the offensive zone. He has the skill to be successful with top-line minutes, but his deployment is terrorizing opponents

while he picks apart their middle-six forwards.

He is tied for first on the team in goals scored at 11, and he's second in points at 22. He is on pace to score 36 goals this season, which is equivalent to 53 goals over a full 82-game season, despite only playing an average of 16:55 per game.

Points aside, Ehlers ranks fourth in the league in drawn penalties (13) while only being penalized twice.

Neal Pionk is also having a strong season because of the realignment. He's got a small body that plays big, dolling out 45 hits, second most among Jets.

"[He's] a guy you might consider undersized, but he certainly doesn't play undersized," said Jets captain Blake Wheeler recently. "I mean, you guys have seen him. He will run into anyone at full speed, he makes incredible plays with the puck, and he has shown an ability to bury an open opportunity."

After being deemed dispensable and traded to Winnipeg along with a first-round draft pick for Jacob Trouba last season, Pionk has become a reliable defender for the Jets. He ranks third in the league among defenders in goals (three) and seventh in the league in points (16).

The North Division is fun to watch for fans, creating lasting rivalries, and it also features top-end talent. So far the Jets have been able to match up against any team in the division, and they arguably have the deepest group of forwards, which can make them a force as the rest of the season plays out.



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Arts & Entertainment

New Single on the Way from Brady Kenneth

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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Brady Kenneth, acclaimed local country music artist, is set to release his new single, "I Hope You Get Drunk," coming out March 12.

Kenneth is a frequent performer at festivals across Manitoba and was selected as a finalist for the Boots & Hearts Emerging Artist competition in 2019. Later that same year, he was nominated for the Manitoba Country Music Association's Emerging Artist Award. In 2020, his five-song EP entitled "Movin' On" was released on Spotify, and Kenneth is now looking forward to more releases in 2021.

This latest new song is part of a strategy for the singer to compile a "slow release" album by putting out a new single every few weeks.

"With everything being online now, consumers tend to get bored quickly and easily," Kenneth says. "So I think it's far better to grab their attention with one great song at a time, as opposed to spending months and tens, if not hundreds of thousands, of dollars on a full album that ends up having only three songs that get heard."

The full artistic vision for the upcoming collection is undetermined, but the first of the new songs focuses on a typical source of inspiration: lost love.

"I Hope You Get Drunk" is essentially a song about hoping your ex comes back," he explains. "Or if not, then at least has a lapse in judgment and gives you some false hope for a night."

The songwriter acknowledges the title may raise some eyebrows, but he says it's not his intention to glamorize drunkenness.

"The message is less about actually drinking and getting drunk, and much more about hoping your



Brady Kenneth is releasing a new single, with others to follow as the year goes on.

BRADY KENNETH

ex comes back to you. It's just a really clever and new way of saying it," says Kenneth. "And that's exactly what country music is—finding new and clever ways of saying the same thing over and over. Because people can relate to it. I think all songs should be taken and interpreted with somewhat of a grain of salt. I feel like just because some songs portray drinking and getting drunk as fun or even 'cool,' it doesn't mean that's the intended message. I would say that everyone has a choice in what they listen to. If you don't like it, don't listen to it. Simple as that."

Kenneth's frankness only underscores his relatability. In a time when most music genres have seen a decrease in streaming listenership since the pandemic began, country music, according to many online sources, is the only genre to have grown.

"The genre has averaged 11.1 percent more plays since mid-March," reads a claim from *The Atlantic*.¹ One theory to explain this is the unifying human experience inherent

in country music's most common themes. The same article refers to how common it is to have "cravings for the regular ol' times."

During the pandemic, Kenneth has been able to find a few bright spots despite facing the same challenges many artists are up against.

"Country music has grown so much in recent years and is appealing to all ages and ranges of audiences, but yeah, it's definitely been a challenge for all artists this year," he says. "For example, [in] this song all of the instrumentation was recorded separately by session artists in their own home studios. It's definitely nice to have that ability [to perform and record] digitally and online. I think that's how most musicians are recording and collaborating during all this. Then I was able to fly to Calgary, to a very remote studio, OCL Studios, where just myself and my producer, two-time CCMA producer of the year Jeff Dalziel, recorded my vocals. At that time, Calgary wasn't shut down yet, so we got them in just in time."

COVID-19 challenges aside, Kenneth is transparent about the challenge of staying motivated to work on his music and find inspiration during the long Manitoba winters.

"As a person who's dealt with a certain anxiety my whole life, winter can definitely be especially difficult," says Kenneth. "On the other hand, it can inadvertently get you more focused on music since there's less to do. And literally, there was nothing else to do this year. I'm naturally a homebody and don't mind being there, by myself for days, even weeks at a time."

Pandemic restrictions mean isolation currently continues without a clear end in sight for many areas of North America, and many artists are already projecting the impact this will have on festival season.

Manitoba typically has a vast number of outdoor performing opportunities all summer long at fairs and festivals.

"I support whatever is safe and realistic. It's been a tough year for artists and many other industries.

And it's not over yet. So I think if we can keep a positive and hopeful attitude, and do what we can when we can, things will eventually start looking up. It's kind of out of our control anyway."

Even though he doesn't yet have any confirmed 2021 performance dates, Kenneth is looking into new ways to arrange performances at smaller or more socially distanced venues.

"Unfortunately, it's looking like another year of minimal performances, especially fairs and festivals," he says. "If that suddenly changes, I'll be there! Other than that, we are definitely looking into a few things. If restrictions ease up a bit over spring, I look forward to booking more private, outdoor, socially distanced house shows."

His hopeful attitude stems from his commitment to hard work and is a message to anyone struggling through these darker days.

"I like the quote by Pablo Picasso: 'Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working.' Sure, sometimes—and rarely—great ideas and inspiration just pop into your head, but ultimately great things come from hard work. Pick up your guitar even when you don't feel a thing. You might write a hit."

You can find "I Hope You Get Drunk" and all other Brady Kenneth songs on Spotify and Apple Music, and follow him on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

REFERENCES

¹ Spencer Kornhaber, "Country Music Can No Longer Hide Its Problems," *The Atlantic*. July 15, 2020 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/07/country-music-pandemic-protests-the-chicks-gaslighter/614092>).



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Heavenly Care Agency expanding service to meet the ongoing challenge of Covid-19 in Manitoba

Like the rest of the world, Manitobans continue to deal with Covid-19, the pandemic that is the most serious health crisis to affect Canadians in more than a hundred years. It has added significantly to the challenges faced by those caring for older loved ones as well as people with disabilities. When Manitoba followed the lead of the rest of the country in shutting things down last spring, among the most difficult blows was the cancellation of most visiting at all health care institutions, including personal care homes. More than half of Canada's 20,000 Covid deaths have occurred in personal care homes and nursing homes, including many of the hundreds of deaths here in Manitoba. In an effort to avoid such tragedy, many families have been looking for reliable care that can happen at home.

Heavenly Care is a private home care agency, providing personalized services to a wide range of clients in Manitoba. Services include assistance with grooming, dressing, toilet, transferring clients in and out of bed, and transportation to medical appointments and grocery shopping. Heavenly Care provides a wide range of assistance to make sure that basic daily needs are met in a caring and dignified way. They also help clients deal with loneliness and memory issues.

In response to the High demand of our business, heavenly care agency is expanding to other communities by doing so, Heavenly Care Agency is also creating jobs for the local people in these new communities at a time when so many people are losing jobs due to Covid. The agency is pleased to be able to offer these

job opportunities to those living in the community.

Heavenly Care is about keeping people in the comfort of their own home. Their staff develop one to one long term relationships with clients. Heavenly care also recognizes the risks their staff face when caring for clients, therefore they follow Covid -19 protocols to the letter. Staff are allocated in ways that prevent workers from interacting with multiple clients. Staff and clients remain safe and clients get to know staff and build a relationship of trust. For clients with dementia, it's very important that they see familiar faces on a regular basis.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." ~ Gal 6:2



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